**Idiom**  by Lon Yan

力竭声嘶  
**li4 jie2 sheng1 si1**

A study found many local primary school children suffering from a hoarse voice (聲音沙啞) due mainly to lack of rest as they have too much extracurricular activity.

Our voice often becomes hoarse when we are exhausted (精疲力盡). Yelling and screaming too loudly for too long may also hurt our voice. An idiom that comprises these physical conditions is “力竭声嘶” (**li4 jie2 sheng1 si1**).

“力” (**li4**) is “strength,” “power,” “竭” (**jie2**) is “to use up,” “exhaust,” “聲” (**sheng1**) is “voice” and “嘶” (**si1**) means “the neighing of a horse,” or “hoarse.” Literally, “力竭声嘶” (**li4 jie2 sheng1 si1**) is “strength exhausted, voice hoarse.”

It means “with voice hoarse and not an ounce of strength left,” “to shout oneself hoarse,” “to shout oneself blue in the face,” or “exhausted from effort.”

It can be used, literally, to describe someone who has been screaming and shouting for too long. The miners screamed for help in the collapsed mine shaft for hours until they were “力竭声嘶” (**li4 jie2 sheng1 si1**), but no rescue came.

In the study, one student said sometimes he cried at home or argued with his brother until his voice hurt. We can say that crying and shouting had left the student “力竭声嘶” (**li4 jie2 sheng1 si1**).

The idiom can also be used figuratively to describe someone who is trying strenuously to make a point. Some of our lawmakers do look “力竭声嘶” (**li4 jie2 sheng1 si1**) every time they stand up to speak!

Terms containing the character “竭” (**jie2**) include:

- **枯竭** (**ku1 jie2**) – completely dried up
- **虚竭** (**xu1 jie2**) – exhausted (vitality, funds)
- **竭尽** (**jie2 jin4**) – to the last measure (drop, ounce)
- **竭力** (**jie2 li4**) – make utmost efforts, try one’s best